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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with certificate programs in community colleges in which students are required to complete 15-32 credits, usually in one year. The paper argues in favor of technical as opposed to nontechnical programs, suggesting that the former are more meaningful to the majority of students who are career oriented than the latter. Three appendixes are included: a two-page certificate program in data processing (to which a sample drafting technology curriculum is attached); a one-page general studies certificate program; and a four-page partial listing of certificate program offerings in New York State. (JR)

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THE ROLE OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Steven L. Shapiro

Today's community colleges must offer their students a choice of alternatives to satisfy their individual wants and needs. Traditionally, the community college has served the career oriented student wishing to gain two years of post-secondary educational training. The transfer minded students wishing to pursue four or more years of post-secondary education were also helped. It should be noted, however, that many career degree (A.A.S.) recipients do continue at senior colleges, while many students that have gained transfer degrees (A.S.) terminate their formal education at the end of the two year program.

Today's educational marketplace is changing almost as quickly as food prices. A student entering college under an open admissions policy is often inadequately prepared for college level requirements. This student may be in need of remedial assistance, diagnostic and vocational performance testing, and the services of a well-trained vocational counselor. While this student may be vocationally naive, he will be asked to make decisions which can greatly affect his or her future.

The Role of Certificate Programs

What is a certificate program? It is a plan whereby the student is required to complete from 15-32 credits, usually in one year. This can be compared to the associate degree, (60-65 credits) taken over two years-the period mandated by most two-year degree programs.

Should the certificate program replace the associate degree? It definitely should not, and it is not intended to do so. The certificate should not replace the degree for the student who is able and willing to complete the degree requirements. Certificates should be designed for those students who do not initially have an associate degree as their objective; for those who find that once enrolled in a degree program they are unable to fulfill all of the requirements. Due to remediation, withdrawals, etc., the average student today takes three years, rather than two, to complete the associate degree requirements of an urban community college operating under an open admissions system. Certificates can thus go far to reach an ever-increasing segment of the two-year college population; those needing more immediate rewards from college than the degree program can provide.

What makes certificate programs work? A total commitment on the part of administration and faculty whereby both groups are able to adopt a common philosophy of purpose is needed to make certificate programs meaningful. They must work together in developing and

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adopting realistic certificate programs that can function as integral and respected parts of the degree-granting institution. A viable method for organizing and operating the certificate programs is then needed. The programs must be plainly visible to incoming students as well as enrolled degree candidates. The program's purpose must be clearly defined and fully understood by all potential enrollees. It should include provisions for easy exchange of students with options to transfer in or out, as well as provision for certificate recipients to move into the second year of degree programs. Certificate and degree programs should provide for common courses, cooperation in recruitment and placement, and sharing of instructional and curricular ideas.

What Is Success?

The key to success probably lies with the philosophy surrounding the offering of certificate programs. Many educators feel that the certificate should be technically oriented and, like a contract between the school and the student, should assure students that a meaningful job awaits those who complete the program successfully. (See Appendix A).

Others feel that the successful completion of non-vocationally oriented, even unrelated, courses is still beneficial and worthy of recognition with a certificate. (See Appendix B).

These educators hold that the student cannot and should not expect to find employment based solely on his successful completion of a specified number of courses.

Philosophy & Finance

Both philosophies have merit and both points of view are in evidence at community and junior colleges in New York City and New York State (See Appendix C) as well as throughout the country. The non-vocational certificate does satisfy the needs of certain groups of students, including mature students seeking additional educational experience; those with no vocational objectives who are searching for direction; and individuals who hope that some form of college "paper" will be of future benefit. However, it is the motivation of the institution which offers such certificates that must be examined. If its purpose is to attract and maintain as much revenue as possible in the form of tuition or state aid, the concept fails. If the purpose is to overcome rising attrition rates by presenting an award for the completion of one year of study rather than have the student "drop out," the result is equally unfortunate. Some schools today are considering certificates in remedial studies. It is difficult at best to measure the value of such a certificate to the individual who receives it. If the recipient views that certificate as terminal and a symbol of accomplishment in higher education,

he will be rudely awakened upon seeking entry into the labor force. Even if he is not quite so naive as to believe the certificate in remedial studies is valuable, what can be done with it? Rather than spend a year gaining a certificate in remedial studies, wouldn't the student be better rewarded by getting specific job-related training for a similar period of time? This could lead to employment rather than disillusionment. In today's tight job market, technical training is often better preparation for earning a living than a series of advanced degrees.

Certificates should be practical. By definition they should "certify" a level of proficiency in a tangible skill. They should encourage individualization in learning and instruction as well as instructional innovation.

What Is Wrong With Teaching Entry Level Skills?

Today's entering college students generally perceive certificate programs as being vocationally oriented; and, indeed, a majority of the current ones are. But supporters of non-technical certificates seem to be increasing in numbers despite the fact that we are part of an age of specialization where job descriptions are becoming narrower and narrower in scope -- and despite the numerous research studies that show positive correlations between structure and better student attitudes and achievement.

Why do administrators and faculty members at many institutions seek to promote "liberal educational programs" when supply far exceeds demand in many job markets? Why do they believe those programs that prepare students only for entry-level positions and not for upward mobility (requiring liberal arts content) are inappropriate? Why do they promote the teaching of generalized, theoretical knowledge rather than specific entry-level skills? The vocational certificate is today satisfying a definite need in the field of higher education. More and more institutions are seeking to introduce certificate programs for the first time, or at least to broaden current offerings. There appears to be some uncertainty, however, as to what path to follow: technical or general. Except for certain situations, there should be no uncertainty at all as to which certificate is more desirable. A certificate in general studies prepares the recipient for practically nothing. There is very little real benefit. Most students perceive certificates as technically oriented. Even those who do not fully understand certificate programs are generally entering college with a career objective and are seeking training to meet that objective. They must acquire the skills necessary to gain meaningful employment.

Resolving the Conflict

This is not to say that there is no value or place for liberal education. The problem is there is no time in a one-year program. Liberal education is important to help employees achieve upward mobility, but fits more logically into degree programs which are necessarily more involved. However, the generalists persist in their attempt to re-define the purpose of certificate programs. The following excerpts from the recent Task Force Study on the Educational Mission of the City University of New York are indicative of the attitudes of many of our professional colleagues toward career education of all types:

> "But the curricular route to these aims of liberal education should be open to choice, and not confined to a particular set of subjects. While aspects of liberal education can be given even in technical institutes if the subject matter is taught with an eye to its liberalizing possibilities, it is the well-taught liberal arts material that is the special contribution of higher education."
>
> "What is new is the universe of students now in the University. They include, for the first time, a significant number of students from ethnic groups long exposed to deprivation and uniquely stubborn forms of discrimination, and an even larger number with low levels of preparation. For these new groups there is, and will continue to be, an even greater concern for good jobs and upward mobility. Although college education in CUNY has long been de facto career-oriented for many students, what is unique now is the diversity of curricula available and the ever-wider variety of vocationally oriented courses and program. This reflects changes in technology and the peculiar manpower requirements of New York City. The issue is not whether to promote or repudiate career training but how to put it into proper perspective."

When placing certificate programs in proper perspective, the emphasis must be on training for a vocation. If it is, the informal contract between school and student can be one of mutual satisfaction and mutual success.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN DATA PROCESSING

	HOURS LEC.	LAB.	CREDITS
*BE-01 Composition Workshop	3	1	0
*BE 03 College Reading & Study Skills Improvement	3	1	0
*MA 10 Basic Mathematical Skills	5		0
EN 11 English Composition I	3		3
BU 50 Principles of Business Data Processing	2	2	3
BU 51 Computer Programming for Business Application I	2	3	3
BU 52 Computer Programming for Business Application II	2	3	3
BU 53 Computer Programming for Business Application III	3	3	4
BU 54 Systems Analysis and Design	2	2	3
BU 56 Operating Systems	3		3
Students with Data Processing experience may earn course credit on the basis of a combination of interview and written examinations. Course credit earned in this manner is limited to two courses.			
TOTALS	28	15	22

*Or satisfactory score on placement examinations.

APPENDIX A (continued)

DRAFTING TECHNOLOGY CURRICULUM

A One-Year Certificate Program
with Associate Degree Option

Required Course of Study

		Credit Hours
FIRST SEMESTER		
DRF 5480	Drafting Techniques I	4
DRF 5481	Drafting Specialties	5
DRF 5485	Technical Communications	3
** ---	Math (by placement)	4
		16
SECOND SEMESTER		
DRF 5482	Drafting Techniques II	4
DRF 5483	Design Drafting	5
DRF 5488	Strength of Materials	3
MET 5422	Processes	3
TEC 5601	Intro. to Technical Calculations	1
		16

** Non-credit Math not applicable to Associate Degree

APPENDIX B

GENERAL STUDIES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

ONE YEAR

TERM 1		HOURS PER WEEK CLASS	LAB.	CREDITS
GS 150	English	3	0	0
GS 110	Elements of Technical Mathematics	5	0	0
GS 101	Physical Science	6	0	0
GS 120	Technical Calculations	0	4	0
GS 130	*Engineering Drawing (Technical Option).	0	3	1
	or			
GS 153	*Verbal Reasoning (Liberal Arts Option).	3	0	0
		14-17	7-4	1-0
TERM 2				
GS 151	English	3	0	0
GS 111	Elements of Technical Mathematics	5	0	0
GS 102	Physical Science	6	0	0
GS 121	Technical Calculations	0	4	0
GS 131	*Engineering Drawing (Technical Option).	0	3	1
	or			
GS 154	*Verbal Reasoning (Liberal Arts Option).	3	0	0
		14-17	7-4	1-0
TERM 3				
GS 152	English	3	0	0
GS 112	Elements of Technical Mathematics	5	0	0
GS 103	Physical Science	3	0	0
GS 122	Technical Calculations	0	2	0
GS 140	Chemistry	3	2	0
GS 132	*Engineering Drawing (Technical Option).	0	3	1
	or			
GS 155	*Verbal Reasoning (Liberal Arts Option).	3	0	0
		14-17	7-4	1-0

*Options are 3-quarter sequences, so students must take all three courses in the same option.

A ONE-YEAR GENERAL STUDIES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

FIRST SEMESTER		Cr. Hrs.	SECOND SEMESTER		Cr. Hrs.
----	Elective	--	----	Elective	--
----	Elective	--	----	Elective	--
----	Elective	--	----	Elective	--
----	Elective	--	----	Elective	--
*GES 7221	College Experience	2	----	Elective	--
		14/16			14/16

APPENDIX C

PARTIAL LISTING OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OFFERINGS IN NEW YORK STATE

School	Certificate Program
A. University Centers	
1. U.C. at Albany	Reading, Speech, Pathology, School Psychologist, Ed. Psychology
2. U.C. at Binghamton	Afro-American Studies
3. U.C. at Buffalo	Elementary Education
B. University Colleges	
C. Health Science Centers	
1. Downstate Health Sciences Center	University Hospital Administration, Psychoanalytic Medicine
D. Specialized Colleges	
1. Forestry	Forest Technology-Ranger School
E. Agricultural & Technical Colleges	
1. Alfred	Bus-Machine Clerical, Industrial Management, Automechanics, Building Construction, Tech-Surveying, Electrical Construction, Professional Truckdriving, Food Service
2. Canton	Agricultural Production, Bus-Secretarial Studies, Building Construction, Drafting, Heating Service, Industrial Machine Tools, Dental Assisting, Food Service
3. Cobleskill	Agriculture Mechanics, Fisheries & Wildlife Technology, Dairy Cattle Management, Grounds Maintenance, Greenhouse Maintenance Office Services, Commercial Cooking
4. Delhi	Institutional Grounds-Keeper, Bus-Management, Marketing, Secretarial Studies, Auto Mechanics, Carpentry, Data Processing, Drafting, Electronics Equipment Repair, Heavy Equipment Operator, Masonry, Plumbing, ETC.
5. Farmingdale	Ornamental Horticulture, Advertising Art, Graphic Arts and Advertising Technology, ETC. in areas of cooking, nursing, public services, business, Elec. & Mech. Tech.

PARTIAL LISTING OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OFFERINGS IN NEW YORK STATE

School	Certificate Program
6. Morrisville	Forest Products, Clerical Skills, Machine Operator, Nurse, Commercial Cooking, Advanced Chef Training
F. Community Colleges - CUNY	
1. Borough of Manhattan	Comptometer, Stenography, Typewriting, Building Maintenance, IBM Keypunch, Nursing Prep, College Prep Program
2. Bronx Community College	
3. Hostos Community College	Inhalation Therapy, Medical Transcriber
4. Kingsborough Community College	Clerical Record Keeping, Merchandising for Management Trainees, Stenography, Medical Records Technology
5. LaGuardia Community College	
6. New York City Community College	Numerical Control, Printing Ink Technician, Hearing Aid Dispensing, Hospital Food Service Supervision, Nursing Home Administration, Ophthalmic Dispensing, Pest Control Operations, Sanitation Management, Driving Instructors Education
7. Queensborough Community College	Data Processing, Drama
8. Staten Island Community College	Manufacturing Tech, Medical Assistant
G. All Other Community Colleges	
There are 30 community colleges in the state, in addition to the 7 CUNY branches. The following represents a sampling of the certificate programs offered. (Emphasis is on unusual programs.)	
1. Rockland	Data Processing (1 yr.); Dental Assisting (1 yr. with possibility of transfer to a Degree Program)

PARTIAL LISTING OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OFFERINGS IN NEW YORK STATE

School	Certificate Program
2. Westchester	Human Services (1 yr. certificate program or 2 yr. Degree program). Courses include Communication Skills, Nutrition, Speech, Devel. Psych., Psych. of Adjustment, Social Problems, Consumer Economics, Ecology, Field Experience & Seminar Work. Possible Careers: Recreation Reader, Child Day-Care Center Supervisor, etc.
3. Suffolk	Drafting, Electronics, Fire Science, Clerical Science, Secretarial Studies, Dental Office Assisting & Accounting (1 yr.)
4. Clinton	Fire Science, Clerical-Typist, Criminal Justice (proposed) (1 yr.)
5. Auburn	Programs from 9 to 36 credits. 9 credits for Data Processing Operations; 36 credits for Systems Analysis; Accounting, Educational Aide, Fire Science, Police Science, Television Tech., etc.
6. Herkimer County	Educational Assistant - 1 yr. Training for auxiliary personnel in Education. Courses include: Intro. Psych., Library, Audio-Visual, Typing, Speaking, Health, Sociology, etc.
7. Jamestown	Lab. Assistant - 1 yr. in class work; 1 yr. in Laboratory, off-campus.
8. Monroe	Human Services (20-24 credits: includes field work, seminars, and courses); Audio-Visual Tech., Optical Lab, Police Science, Civil Tech., etc.

PARTIAL LISTING OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OFFERINGS IN NEW YORK STATE

School	Certificate Program
9. Niagara County	Child Care Training (includes in-residence training). General Studies - 1 yr. Certificate. Full or partial credit given to those who subsequently enter Degree Program. Courses include: English Composition, Humanities Seminar. College Experience, Behavior & Adjustment, Typing, Literature and Composition, Social Science Seminar, Leadership Seminar, Health Education, & Marketing Technology.
10. Broome	Collegiate Studies Certificate Program - 1 yr. Originally, this was Pre-Technical Training, preparing students for engineering & tech. curricula. Now, it prepares students for all the college's offerings. Basic core of courses includes English, Math, and Science to give the student a broad base of academic preparation.

NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Those under the Sponsorship of the New York City Board of Higher Education:

Borough of Manhattan
Bronx
Hostos
Kingsborough
New York City
Queensborough
Staten Island

All other Community Colleges:

Adirondack
Auburn
Broome Technical
Clinton
Columbia-Greene
Community College of the Finger Lakes
Corning
Dutchess
Erie
Fashion Institute
Fulton-Montgomery
Genesee
Herkimer County
Hudson Valley
Jamestown
Jefferson
Mohawk Valley
Monroe
Nassau
Niagara
North Country
Onondaga
Orange County
Rockland
Schenectady
Suffolk County
Sullivan County
Tompkins-Cortland
Ulster County
Westchester